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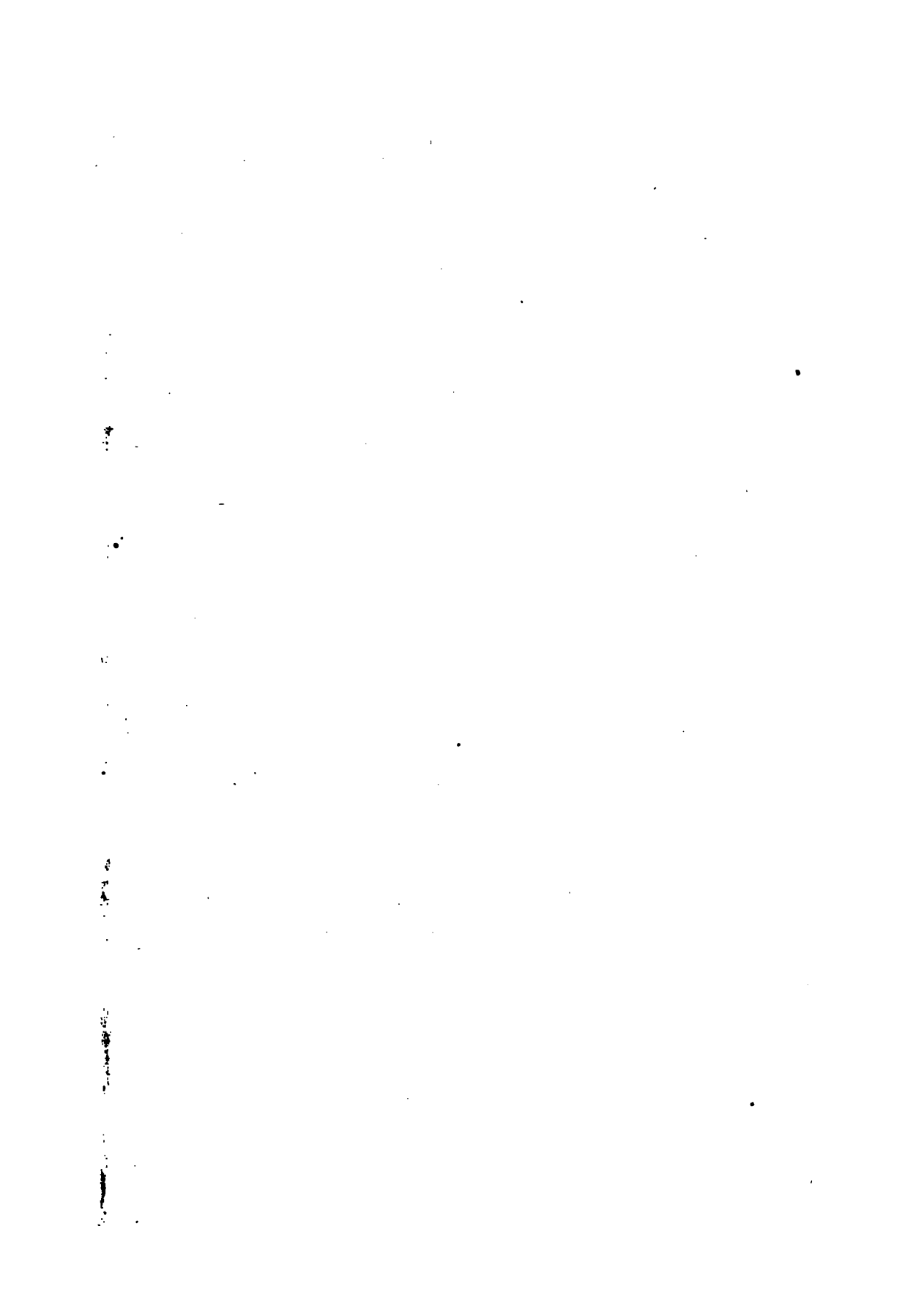
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF THE LATE
GEN. B. J. SWEET.

HISTORY OF CAMP DOUGLAS.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL
SOCIETY,

TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE 18TH, 1878,

BY

WILLIAM BROSS, A. M.,

Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, 1865-9.

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Chicago, June 19th, 1878.

Ex-Lieutenant Governor William Bross.

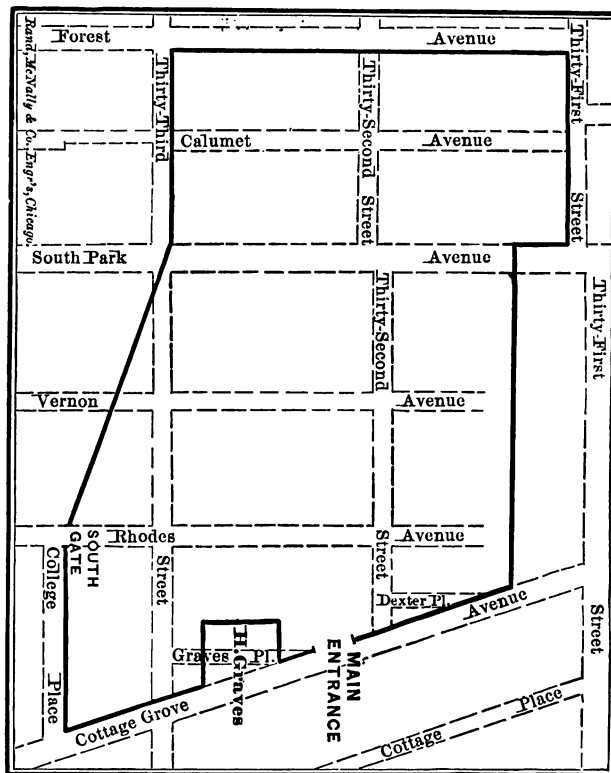
DEAR SIR: *I have the honor to inform you that at a meeting of the Chicago Historical Society, held last evening, the following resolution was adopted:*

"RESOLVED, That the thanks of this Society are due, and are hereby tendered to Hon. William Bross, for his valuable and interesting historical paper relating to Camp Douglas and the late Gen. B. J. Sweet, and that he be requested to furnish the Society with a copy for publication."

Very Respectfully,

ALBERT D. HAGER,

Secretary.



CAMP DOUGLAS, 1864-5.

DOTTED LINES SHOW STREETS AS NOW LOCATED.

For Description of the Camp, see Page 11.

GEN. B. J. SWEET.

History of Camp Douglas.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

CHICAGO, with the exception of San Francisco, the youngest of the leading cities of the Republic, has abundant reason to be satisfied with her patriotic record made during the Rebellion. From that quiet Sabbath morning, when the news flashed through the streets, that the rebels had fired upon Fort Sumpter at 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon, April 12, 1861, and the people left their churches, with the organ pealing out the "Star Spangled Banner," till treason was stamped out by the capture of Jeff. Davis, on the 10th of May, 1865, a very large majority of them seemed deeply imbued with the same spirit that inspired their fathers when "they pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor," to preserve the integrity, and to establish the liberty of their country. The Board of Trade, though purely a commercial organization, was accorded the leadership in raising regiments and batteries, and they, and our merchants and citizens generally, poured out their money without stint for this purpose, and to send hospital stores to the front; the ladies got up sanitary fairs, and generally, from the beginning to the end of the war, all the energies, the wealth, and the power of the city were at the service of the Government. The treason and malignity of the few slimy copperheads, that crawled about the dens of the city, seemed only to render the patriotism of the people the more conspicuous and inspiring. But though few in number, the traitors were ever active, and if Chicago escaped the bloody riots, the murders, and the incendiaries' torch that were rife in New York

Baltimore, and it was simply because she had a small force of "the bravest of the brave" at Camp Douglas, commanded by an able general, whose energy never faltered, and whose vigilance never slept.

The State has recorded, too briefly, it is true, the deeds of our brave boys on the battle-fields of the Republic. The National Sanitary Commission has preserved the benevolent acts of our people; but the complete History of Camp Douglas, and more especially, the means by which Chicago was saved from destruction, remains to be written.

Prof. Elias Colbert in his "History of the Garden City," published in 1868, gives much valuable information and very important facts and figures, for many of which I am greatly indebted, but I shall confine myself, in this paper, mainly to what I know personally about these matters, to statements of men now living in our midst, and accurate sources of information now in my possession.

What the public may remember of the modest but brave soldier who commanded Camp Douglas during Chicago's greatest danger in 1864, and to whom the city owes her escape from burning and massacre, is derived mainly from brief newspaper articles at the time of his death. I therefore beg your attention to a short

Biographical Sketch of Brigadier General B. J. Sweet.

For the record, much of it in her own language, previous to his taking command of Camp Douglas, I am indebted to his accomplished daughter, Miss Ada C. Sweet, Pension Agent of this city.

BENJAMIN JEFFREY SWEET was born in Kirkland, Oneida County, New York, April 24th, 1832. His father was the Rev. James Sweet, and his mother was Charlotte, daughter of the Rev. Jeffrey Newell.

The Rev. James Sweet was a man of large heart and a fine, vigorous intellect. He was a speaker of great power, but his life was clouded by ill health and inadequate opportunities.

Mrs. Sweet was a woman of remarkably strong mind and character; a warm hearted, affectionate wife and mother, whose courage never faltered, though tried by care, sickness, and grief almost beyond the strength of human endurance to bear.

Benjamin Jeffrey was named for his two grandfathers, Benjamin Sweet and Jeffrey Newell. He was the eldest of fourteen

children, and after his tenth year he was one of the bread-winners of the family—often its main stay—as his father's health was broken. His boyhood was one of hard work and independent exertion.

When he was nine years old he worked in a cotton mill, and soon became the most expert and accurate weigher in it—too expert, indeed, for his own good, as his employers refused to advance him at all because he was so valuable in his place as weigher. For several years, while a growing boy, his deep sleep was often broken by the clanging of the factory bell, at four o'clock in the morning. Sometimes he would get time for several weeks of school, and he studied at all times and seasons whenever a spare hour could be snatched from his long working days.

In 1848, the family moved to Stockbridge, Calumet County, Wisconsin, and made their home there, on a small piece of wild forest land.

Benjamin worked like a young giant, clearing away the trees and bringing savage nature under subjection. The first winter he spent in Wisconsin, he stood, day after day, knee deep in snow, swinging his axe with his strong young arms, dreaming dreams of future health and usefulness. After a year of hard work he took his small earnings and entered Appleton College, Wisconsin.

In the spring of 1850 he returned home, and taught school at Brothertown, a settlement near by. Wherever he was and whatever his occupation, he was always an earnest student. After a hard day's work, he would read far into the night, and many a time the dawn found him still bending over his books.

At the age of nineteen he was in appearance, and indeed in experience and maturity of mind, a man. He was strong and athletic, and well skilled in all bodily exercises. He was genial in manner, warm hearted, full of gentle and playful humor, and a general favorite wherever he went.

In his home, then far removed from cities, there was a lack of books, but those which fell into the hands of the ambitious young man, were read and re-read. About this time he first made the acquaintance of Shakespeare's works, which he studied with passionate interest. Shakespeare remained, during his life, his study in leisure, his solace and comfort in grief, and his recreation

at all times. His father and many of his friends wished him to enter the ministry, but he turned his attention to the study of law.

I give these particulars the more freely, for they show the kind of stern discipline to which most of our leading generals and statesmen have been subjected. From necessity they learn what hard work is in their youth and early manhood, and hence their success and usefulness in after life.

In May, 1851, at the age of nineteen years, he married Miss Lovisa L. Denslow. She was a daughter of Elihu Denslow, and from the same place in New York as the Sweet family, and an old school and playmate of her young husband.

February 23d, 1852, a daughter was born to the young couple, and named Ada Celeste; in 1854, Lawrence Wheelock; in 1858, Minnie; in 1865, Martha Winfred; and his youngest son Benjamin Jeffrey, named for his father, was born January 11th, 1871.

In 1859, Gen. Sweet was elected to the Wisconsin State Senate. He was a Republican and a strong Abolitionist.

He clearly foresaw the great impending struggle, and at the beginning of the war advocated the raising of more troops than was thought necessary at that time. When the war broke out, he was one of the very first to enlist. He was commissioned Major, and went out with the Sixth Wisconsin Regiment.

The Regiment was stationed on the Potomac, and in the summer of 1862, weary with the inactivity of McClellan's army, Maj. Sweet resigned, came home, raised two new regiments, the Twenty-first and Twenty-second, and started again for the field as Colonel of the Twenty-first Wisconsin. The Twenty-first was ordered to the front before it had been mustered in three weeks, and was soon in its first battle at Perryville, Ky., on the 8th day of October, 1862. All day one corps of the Union forces sustained the whole force of Bragg's army, which was on its retreat from the East Tennessee raid.

The new regiment was poorly armed and composed of raw recruits, but it had been well drilled and disciplined, and, considering the short time it had been organized, the men fought like veterans, and sustained a terrible loss of life. Three hundred were killed or wounded. The major and three captains were killed, and Col. Sweet, it was thought, was mortally wounded.

He had been ill for several days with malarial fever, contracted from sleeping on the ground and from general exposure, but when the fight began he left the ambulance where he was lying, mounted his horse, and took command of his regiment.

Early in the engagement he received a flesh wound in the neck, which did not affect him for a minute, though his regiment was nearly panic stricken when they saw that he was struck. He, however, remained untouched in a perfect storm of bullets during the rest of the engagement, but at the close, as he was rallying his men to leave the field for the night, a minnie ball, from a sharp-shooter's rifle came crashing into his right elbow, crushing the bones, tearing up the arm, and lodging in the chest.

For several weeks his life was despaired of, and only by the most tender care of his wife, who joined him immediately, and that of two of his soldiers, Jas. Hodges and Chauncy Button, of the Twenty-first regiment, was he saved from impending death. His arm was saved, but the wound remained open and very painful for over a year, and caused him untold suffering. His arm ever after hung useless at his side.

Although his health was shattered permanently, and he seemed to his friends only a hollow-cheeked shadow of his old self, he steadily refused to leave the army. He was subsequently given a commission as Colonel in the Veteran Reserve Corps, and in the winter of 1862-63 built a fort at Gallatin, Tenn., where he was in command.

Late in May, 1864, General Sweet was ordered to take command of Camp Douglas. It proved, by far, the most important position he had ever held, and we are now prepared to give

A History

Of that post. As only thirteen years have passed since it was abandoned, its property removed, and its buildings were sold, it may seem strange that the most difficult part of my task has been to find what were its exact boundaries. I could say, with scores of our old citizens of whom I asked the question, "where was Camp Douglas?" that it was located directly north of the University, fronting east, on Cottage Grove Avenue; but what were its exact limits east and west, north and south, it seemed for a time, about

impossible for me to determine. After devoting leisure half hours among my friends for a couple of weeks, with no satisfactory results, I fortunately made the acquaintance of Capt. E. R. P. Shurley, Gen'l Sweet's Assistant Adjutant General, Capt. Charles Goodman, for most of the time Chief Quartermaster, from October 23, 1862, till the camp was closed; and his chief assistant, Capt. E. V. Roddin. It is the highest possible compliment to Capt. Goodman that about \$40,000,000 worth of Government property passed through his hands, and not a single mistake of any kind was found in his accounts. These gentlemen, on Tuesday, June 4th, spent half a day with me going all around and over the grounds once occupied by Camp Douglas, and it was one of the richest treats I ever enjoyed to hear them locate the different parts of it, and talk over the incidents of these memorable years. "Here were the ovens, there the hospitals, here was the dead-line, and there the officers quarters; here were the rebel barracks, and in this corner, those that escaped, usually dug out."

The sewer at the foot of Thirty-third Street, costing \$9,000, though the digging was done by the rebels, half a dozen of whom came near losing their lives by the caving of the banks, still does excellent duty, and discharges a large stream into the lake; it was built of plank, and hence it may be doubted whether it will last as long as the Cloaca Maxima, which still performs the same service for which it was built by Tarquin, 2,500 years ago.

In 1861, when the Camp was located by General A. C. Fuller, then Adjutant General of the State, and until after it was abandoned in 1865, the ground it occupied, and all around it, was open prairie. For this reason the Government took possession of it for that purpose. Now there are several streets cut through it, and single houses, and even blocks are scattered over it in all directions. Hence, it is no disparagement to the excellent military gentlemen who so kindly accompanied me, that they were not a little confused, as to where the fence around Camp Douglas was, and it was not till they compared their impressions with the positive knowledge of the owner of the grounds, Henry Graves, Esq., whom we fortunately met, that I was able to settle, as I hope, definitely, where the enclosure of the Camp was located. None of the streets are named on the latest lithograph of Capt. Goodman,

as also that of Capt. Shurley, both of which I have the pleasure, in their behalf, to present to the Society, though it is not at all difficult to locate Cottage Grove Avenue. A map kindly furnished me by W. B. H. Gray, Esq., conceded to be the best informed man in the city in regard to its topography, was valuable to us; but I am sorry to say it is incorrect in several particulars. After all these preliminaries I can now say that the

Boundaries of Camp Douglas were as follows:

The south-east corner was at the intersection of Cottage Grove Avenue and College Place, the northern boundary of the University Grounds; thence the line ran west on College Place to its intersection with Rhodes Avenue; thence diagonally in a north-westerly direction, to the corner of South Park Avenue and Thirty-third Street; thence west on Thirty-third Street to its intersection with Forest Avenue; thence north on Forest Avenue to Thirty-first Street; thence east along Thirty-first Street to South Park Avenue; thence south along South Park Avenue about one hundred and sixty feet; thence east to Cottage Grove Avenue; thence along that avenue to the place of beginning, except the residence of Henry Graves, Esq., around which the fence was built as shown upon the lithograph.* It was, perhaps, two hundred feet south of the main entrance, three hundred feet front on Cottage Grove Avenue by two hundred feet deep. Since the camp was abandoned, Thirty-second street has been cut through it east and west; and Graves and Dexter Place, Rhodes, Vernon, South Park and Calumet Avenues, with sundry alleys north and south, so that its location might well confuse any one who had not been constantly on the ground as Mr. Graves has, to take note of the changes that have been so constantly going on from year to year. And besides, as above stated, many blocks of

* Since the text was written, Mr. Chas. Cook, who, as boss-carpenter, erected the buildings at Camp Douglas, has brought me a survey of the camp, on which the west line is Calumet Avenue. But as Messrs. Shurley, Goodman, Roddin and Col. Pierce all agree that Forest Avenue was the West line, I prefer to let the description stand; and, as the survey has no date attached, it may be inferred that the camp was afterward extended to Forest Avenue to afford more room for the barracks of the rebel prisoners.

residences, single dwellings, and several grocery houses are now scattered all over it. The south gate was at Rhodes Avenue; the main entrance, the posts of which are still to be seen just above ground was a little north and nearly in front of B. F. Ransom's livery stable. It, with the building next south of it, and the building south of the United States Hotel, on the south-east corner of Cottage Grove Avenue and Thirty-first Street are a part of the buildings once located within the camp. The fence was a substantial wood structure, some twelve feet high, with a walk around it on the inside, some four feet below the top, for the sentinels to go their rounds. This walk or parapet commenced at the entrance on Cottage Grove Avenue, and extended all round the camp. The north-east part of the camp was occupied by the barracks of the troops and officers' quarters.

Camp Douglas was named for Senator Douglas, who gave the grounds for the University, and whose dust reposes on the Lake shore near it. In your behalf and that of the people of the State, I had the honor to sign the bill that appropriated the money from the State Treasury to purchase that acre from his widow, and on which an appropriate monument is soon to perpetuate his memory. Camp Douglas was built in the latter part of the summer of 1861, by Col. Joseph H. Tucker, who had been ordered by Gov. Yates to take command of the northern district of the State. It was at first intended to use it for the troops raised in this part of the State, as a camp of instruction and rendezvous, but Capt. Christopher, United States recruiting officer then stationed in the city, assumed the cost of its construction, and it was turned over to the General Government. Immediately after the capture of Fort Donaldson, in February, 1862, Col. Tucker was ordered to prepare for the reception of the rebels taken there and in some other engagements, and in a few days between eight and nine thousand prisoners arrived in camp. Near the close of the month Col. Tucker was superseded by Col. Mulligan, who there organized his Irish Brigade. In June, Col. Tucker was ordered to take command of the Sixty-ninth Regiment, and again took charge of the camp. During the summer and fall a large number of our own paroled men, captured at Harper's Ferry and other places, among them Capt. Goodman, arrived in camp, and on the last day of September, Gen. Tyler was placed in command. His rule was severe and unpopular and the cause of

much trouble and ill feeling. In the fall of 1862, Gen. Tyler was superseded by Gen. Ammon; our troops that had been paroled at Harper's Ferry were exchanged, and nearly all of them left for the front, and their place was supplied by a camp full of

Rebel Prisoners.

Coming, many of them, from the far South, they suffered severely from the inclemency of our winter. Of course, in spite of all that the officers of the camp, and a self-appointed detachment of our benevolent ladies, could do, large numbers died, and what was due to the rigor of the climate, was charged, by the malignant Copperheads, to the neglect and the cruelty of our people. But it is a fact, or the truth of which I appeal to thousands of living men, North and South, that the prisoners, all through the history of Camp Douglas, were treated precisely as our own soldiers. They had full rations of the best of food, and the sick had all that the most skillful physicians and the most careful nursing could do for them. Capt. Shurley relates that, while on duty at Richmond, after the war, he was recognized by some of his former prisoners, and so grateful were they for their kind treatment while here, that they gave him a splendid dinner, and treated him with all possible attention and politeness. I forbear to draw a parallel between the treatment the rebels received and the systematic cruelty and starvation, even to death, which our brave boys were forced to suffer in the prison pens of the South. Those who saw, as I did, scores of mere ghostly skeletons returning from Salisbury and Andersonville, in 1864, will recoil from the horrible memory.

The Work of the Camp.

The winter of 1862-3 was an eventful one, and many were the men who passed to their long homes in Camp Douglas. By March, 1863, the prisoners had nearly all been exchanged, and only a few of our own troops remained as a guard for them. Up to this time at least 30,000 troops had been recruited, drilled, organized and equipped at Camp Douglas. Prof. Colbert enumerates them as follows: Rock Island Regiment, Nineteenth, Twenty-third, Twenty-fourth, Forty-second, Forty-fourth, Forty-fifth, Fifty-

first, Fifty-third, Fifty-fifth, Fifty-sixth, Fifty-seventh, Fifty-eighth, Sixtieth, Sixty-fifth, or Scotch Regiment; Sixty-seventh, Sixty-ninth, Seventy-first, Seventy-second, or First Board of Trade; Eighty-eighth, or Second Board of Trade; Eighty-ninth, or Railroad Regiment; Ninetieth, or Irish Legion; Ninety-third, One Hundred and Fifth, One Hundred and Thirteenth, Van Arman's Regiment, and the Third Board of Trade Regiment. Of Infantry Companies, the German Guides and the Lyman Color Guard. Cavalry: Ninth, Twelfth and Thirteenth Illinois. Artillery: First Illinois, Bouton's, Bolton's, Silversparre's, Phillips', Ottawa, Mercantile, Elgin, and Board of Trade Batteries. Besides this immense work as a camp of rendezvous and instruction, some 17,000 rebel prisoners and 8,000 of our own paroled troops had all been cared for in and about Camp Douglas in the short space of about eighteen months. This shows what the sternly loyal city of Chicago and the great North-west were ready and willing to do to rescue the Republic from treason and rebellion. I said these troops were cared for in and about Camp Douglas, for it will be remembered at times the section west of the camp and nearly to State street and south, far away toward Hyde Park were covered with camps and open spaces for drilling the troops.

Again Active.

Activity again was the order of the day during the last half of the year 1863, for some 5,000 rebel soldiers arrived in camp; Gen. Ammon was ordered to Springfield, and Col. De Land, of the First Michigan Sharp Shooters was made post commandant under Gen. Orme. During the winter of 1863-4, the usual incidents of camp life occurred. Col. De Land ordered a substantial fence built, the one heretofore described, several new buildings were erected, and the camp was improved in all respects. These important improvements were made under Capt. Chas. Goodman, his assistant, Capt. E. V. Roddin having the immediate charge of the work. On the 2d of May, 1864, General Orme resigned, and General B. J. Sweet assumed the command, his headquarters being on Washington street, in the city. Col. Jas. Strong had the immediate command for a time, under Gen. Sweet, but about the middle of July, Gen.

Sweet removed to camp and took personal command, as the exigencies seemed to require his constant presence. He ordered the prisoners' barracks to be raised several feet, so as to render it impossible for them to dig tunnels and thus escape; their quarters were enlarged; additional hospitals and buildings for stores and equipments were erected, and in all respects the accommodations for troops and prisoners were greatly enlarged and improved. Two regiments, the Eighth and Fifteenth, of the Veteran Reserves—only about 1,000 men, were all the troops Gen. Sweet had to guard his prisoners—every available man had been sent to the front; but just before the assembling of the Democratic Convention, on Monday, July 29th, he was reinforced by the One Hundredth Pennsylvania Regiment, ninety day troops, and the Twenty-fourth Ohio Battery. They were supplied with the best of Parrott Guns, and were kept as a reserve in case of emergency.

Impending Dangers.

At the commencement of 1864, there were some 5,000 rebel prisoners in camp, and about 7,500 were received during the year, and there were probably from ten to twelve thousand there during the incidents I am about to describe. With this very inadequate force, had it not been for the marked ability of Gen. Sweet and his sleepless vigilance, your humble servant and hundreds of other citizens would probably have lost their lives in the burning and massacres that would have followed the breaking out of the prisoners from Camp Douglas.

In the spring and early summer of 1864 the whole country was shrouded in gloom. For more than three years the war had been raging, and yet the rebellion seemed still strong and vigorous and likely to require years of hard fighting before it could be put down, if in fact so desirable a result could ever be achieved. Even brave hearts quailed when thinking upon the tens of thousands of noble patriots who had fallen before the serried hosts of the rebellion, or were wasting slowly away amid tortures worse than death, in rebel prison dens. On every street could be seen strong men, known to all of us, with an empty sleeve, or hobbling along on crutches; and orphans and woe stricken women in sable garments met us at every

turn. Foreign nations were losing confidence in our cause. Lord Bulwer had declared in the English Parliament that it was for the interest of humanity that America should be divided into at least four separate States, for if the country remained united, "in a century hence it would contain two hundred millions of people hanging like a dark cloud upon the civilization of the world." The credit of the nation was about gone, for in July, gold rose to 285, making the greenback, and therefore the credit of the government, worth only thirty-five cents on the dollar. Some enthusiasm followed the renomination of Mr. Lincoln, in June, at Baltimore, but our armies were not generally successful, and a darker pall of gloom settled down upon the country. On the 30th July, the mine at Petersburg was exploded, and in it Chicago lost Col. John A. Bross, and most of his officers, who were selected from the noblest and best young men of the city. Washington did not escape the general despondency. On my way to the front to seek the body of my lost brother, early in the morning before any one else, I called on Mr. Lincoln. His table was covered with reports and bundles of documents over which he was poring; but he received me most cordially and asked anxiously for news from the West. I told him the people were patriotic and determined as ever; but it could not be denied that they were anxious and earnest for a more vigorous prosecution of the war. "Well," said Mr. Lincoln, sadly, "they want success and they haven't got it; but we are all doing the best we can. For my part I shall stay right here and do my duty. Traitors will find me at my table. They can come and hang me to that tree if they like," pointing with his long skinny finger to the maple at his window.

Such was the condition of the country when the Democratic Convention assembled in this city on Monday, August 29th, 1864. It had been postponed from July 4th, in order that the plottings of the Copperhead portion of it might be the better matured. The gloom that pervaded the whole country was specially thick and murky in Chicago. The Knights of the Golden Circle and the Copperheads of every stripe and hue were decidedly active and venomous. Whisperings of blood running through the streets ankle deep, and lamp posts bearing black Republican fruit were in the air. Canada was swarming with rebel officers who, in twenty-four hours could be in

the city, and it was believed that many were here ready to take command of the rebel prisoners at Camp Douglas at any moment.*

It is in times like these that strong men and patriots step forward to save their countrymen from pillage and massacre. Gen. Sweet proved himself the man for the hour. Perhaps two weeks before the Convention assembled, I was standing near the *Journal* office, then in front of the Tremont House, when a friend said to me, "do you know there are ten thousand stand of arms secreted in cellars and basements within four blocks of us?" I said I presume the rebels have that many hid in different parts of the city. During the afternoon several similar stories were told me by others, and in the morning, thinking Gen. Sweet should know them, I called on him at Camp Douglas. He listened to the facts and suspicions I narrated with great attention; said he would investigate them and call at my office the next day at eleven o'clock. I had previously, if any, a mere casual acquaintance with Gen. Sweet, but his close

* In confirmation of this, Capt. Shurley, in a note to me, dated June 3d, says:

At one time we had 22,000 prisoners there, and only a few hundred men for duty at the time the conspiracy was brewing. It was impossible to get reinforcements, notwithstanding Gen. Sweet's urgent appeals. I must say at this time, and after these years have elapsed, that the city of Chicago does not know what she owes to Gen. Sweet.

I released the remaining prisoners of war, and after Gen. Sweet, I was the last commanding officer of that camp — thirteen years ago. After I had paroled some of the most intelligent, I questioned them in reference to the "conspiracy;" they told me that they were divided into companies, regiments and brigades, and confidently expected officers from the South to command them, and the intention was to destroy Chicago after securing all the arms, horses, and whatever would be useful in the prosecution of their war. There is no question that but for the energy, forethought, and ability of General Sweet, and the manner in which he was sustained by General Hooker, serious consequences might have ensued. The question is often asked me, was there really a conspiracy for that purpose—to burn Chicago and other Western towns? All the papers passed through my hands. The reports of the spies out; what transpired at the sessions held by the Knights of the Golden Circle and other kindred organizations in this city, all make me sure there was such a conspiracy. But history should do justice to one who was arrested at that time: I refer to Judge Buckner S. Morris. He was entirely innocent of any such attempt, although arrested and held in camp.

attention and careful analysis of the facts I had given him, gave me great confidence in his ability and fitness for the important post he occupied. He called promptly as appointed and I found his entire detective force had been busy all night searching the city through; that he had verified some of our suspicions, and got track of many more. He had subsequently trusty men in every Golden Circle of the Knights, and by ten o'clock next day he knew what had occurred, and the plans that were made all over the city. Almost every leading rebel that arrived from the South or from Canada was spotted and tracked to his den and could not move, even for the most trivial purpose if a leading man, but sharp loyal eyes were upon him. For a week or more I saw Gen. Sweet frequently, and I found that his detectives tracked like sleuth-hounds every scent and rumor to its source, and his plans and the way he carried them out filled my highest ideal of the ability needed to cope with his adversaries, and I therefore soon gave the matter little further care and attention. On Saturday, August 26th, the Democratic politicians, many of them very respectable gentlemen, with their blowers and strikers, began to arrive. As day after day passed, the crowd increased till the whole city seemed alive with a motley crew of big-shouldered, bleary-eyed, bottle-nosed, whisky-blotched vagabonds—the very excrescence and sweepings of the slums and sinks of all the cities in the nation. I sat often at my window on Michigan Avenue, and saw the filthy stream of degraded humanity swagger along to the wigwam on the lake shore and wondered how the city could be saved from burning and plunder, and our wives and daughters from a far more dreadful fate. Many besides myself would have been in despair had we not trusted in the good providence of God, Gen. Sweet, and the brave boys under him. We knew that he had small squads of men with signs and pass-words in all the alleys in the central portions of the city ready to concentrate at the point of danger at any moment. But the city had another and an efficient source of safety of which many of our people even at this day have not the slightest knowledge. It was a matter of wonder then, and perhaps has been ever since, how such a horde of cut-throats, and bloated, beastly vagabonds, spoiling for free whisky and a free fight, could have been kept in perfect order, for our streets under presence of so many people were never more orderly, and in its doings and surroundings

the Democratic Convention of 1864 was as quiet and respectable as any other political body that ever assembled in the city. This fact can best be understood by relating an incident.

On my way to my office early on Monday, calling in a store on Clark Street, a friend said to me, "do you know the danger we have escaped?" Feigning ignorance, I asked what? He said, "a young gentleman from Kentucky, a warm friend of mine, came in on Friday morning, and, in a whisper, inquired anxiously if my family were in the city; for if they are," said he, "by all means, as you love them, send them to the country this afternoon. Look for horrid times within the next three days—the Devil will be to pay." He was greatly relieved when I told him they were already in the country, and would stay for several days. As he left, he said, "for my sake, keep mum and take good care of yourself." This morning he came in, every feature beaming with pleasure, and said: "we're all safe; the New York politicians, Dean Richmond, Seymour, Tilden and the rest, arrived Saturday and yesterday morning; they caucussed all day yesterday, and last night they put down their foot and declared if there were any riots or disturbance it would ruin the Democratic party; they might as well go home, for the cause would be lost and they would be beaten out of sight at the polls, and orders were accordingly given to the clans and messes;" and said he, "in spite of the hordes of brutal wretches, you see every where, this will be the most orderly convention you ever saw." So it was, and that the orders were imperative and well understood, is well illustrated by another pertinent incident. Henry M. Smith was at the time, in the editorial department of the *Tribune*. He was standing at the entrance, 45 Clark Street, on Monday afternoon, I think it was, when he noticed two big bullies watching him and the boys, who every few minutes darted out with a package of documents which they distributed freely to all who would take them. Glancing over the pamphlet, they saw it contained a sharp, searching war record of their party, and came across the street and asked Smith if he belonged to the *Tribune* office. Answering that he did, they ordered him with words and adjectives, far more expressive and profane than polite, to stop sending out such lying stuff. Quick as lightning the plucky little editor struck the brute with all his might square on his nose, and the rebel blood spurted in all direc-

tions. Either of the men might have crushed the life out of Smith in a moment, but they did not. They knew they must obey their orders, and that there must be no rows, and quietly pocketing the insult they walked toward the Sherman House. In a few moments after, they were arrested and lodged in jail, and then I expected an attempt to rescue them every hour by the abominable rabble in the city, but they obeyed orders, and left their friends to their fate. In the evening or early morning they were let out on their own recognizance and that was the end of the matter. In the light of what followed, it is a fair inference, that in commanding and keeping the peace, the wily New York politicians had not only an eye upon the election to be held in November, but a wholesome regard for their own safety, for it is not unlikely their friends and detectives had pretty accurate knowledge of the arrangements Gen. Sweet had made to give their crowd of bloated wretches a very lively time of it, and in this sternly loyal city, should an emute occur, their own precious skins might be very uncomfortably punctured. Their villainous schemes took a wider range, and likely to do the rebellion far better service, for from their wigwam on the lake shore they planned and got up a tremendous

Fire in the Rear

By resolving "that after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war, during which, under the pretence of a military necessity, or war power, higher than the constitution, the constitution itself has been disregarded in every part, and public liberty and private right alike trodden down, and the material prosperity of the country, essentially impaired, justice, humanity and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for the cessation of hostilities," and this "fire in the rear," they knew they could keep up among the people with perfect safety to each party hack, with great advantage to the rebels till after the November election. Thus they insulted the patriotism of the nation, polluted the breezes and defiled the pure waters of Lake Michigan by blurting out their blatant treason, in the face of high Heaven. The loyal men of the nation accepted the gauge of battle, and the election of Mr. Lincoln and the indorsement of his policy to put



down the rebellion, is one of the most important and glorious events in the history of this Republic.

During the months of September and October, the

Nation Trembled

As by an earthquake from centre to circumference. The war of words in the rail cars, on the streets, from the stump, in fact every where in the loyal States was loud, bitter, relentless and unceasing. Sherman was fighting his way, inch by inch, toward Atlanta; Grant was pounding away in the wilderness, and it required all the energy of Secretary Stanton, a war minister whose place in history has scarcely ever been equaled, to fill up the ranks, decimated before the rebel intrenchments. In its desperation, the Genius of the rebellion seemed more active, malignant and fiendish than ever. Plans to burn all the leading cities of the North and to scatter infectious and deadly diseases throughout the loyal States were carefully and earnestly discussed among the chiefs of the Confederacy.*

*This discussion was kept up through the winter of 1864-5, as the following letter will show. I am indebted to Capt. Shurley for the privilege of publishing it. He saw the original before it was sent to Washington, and vouches for its accuracy:

His Excellency,

PRESIDENT DAVIS,

President C. S. A.

RICHMOND, February 11, 1865.

SIR: When Senator Johnson, of Missouri, and myself waited on you a few days since in relation to the prospect of annoying and harassing the enemy by means of burning their shipping, towns, etc., there were several remarks made by you upon the subject, that I was not fully prepared to answer, but which, upon subsequent conference with parties proposing the enterprise, I find cannot apply as objections to the scheme. The combustible materials consist of several preparations, and not one alone, and can be used without exposing the party using them to the least danger of detection whatever. The preparations are not in the hands of McDaniel, but are in the hands of Professor McCullough, and are known but to him and one other party, as I understand.

There is no necessity for sending persons in the military service into the enemy's country, but the work may be done by agents, and in most cases by persons ignorant of the facts, and therefore innocent agents.

I have seen enough of the effects that can be produced to satisfy me that in most cases, without any danger to the parties engaged, and in others but very slight. We can (1) burn every vessel that leaves a foreign port for the United States. (2) We can burn every transport that leaves the harbor of New York, or other Northern port, with supplies for the armies of the enemy in the South. (3) Burn every transport and gunboat on the Mississippi river, as well as devastate the country of the

In the loyal States, and in our own city especially, venomous Copperheads kept up their warfare to the very last week of the canvas. They were bent on letting loose the ten thousand prisoners in Camp Douglas, that they might burn and destroy the city, and thus prevent an election here.* And besides, they had lists of scores of

enemy, and fill his people with terror and consternation. I am not alone of the opinion, but many other gentlemen are as fully and thoroughly impressed with the conviction as I am. I believe we have the means at our command, if promptly appropriated and energetically applied, to demoralize the Northern people in a very short time. For the purpose of satisfying your mind upon the subject, I respectfully but earnestly request that you will have an interview with Gen. Harris, formerly a member of Congress from Missouri, who, I think, is able by conclusive proof to convince you that what I have suggested is perfectly feasible and practicable.

The deep interest I feel for our cause in this struggle, and the convictions of the importance of availing ourselves of every element of defense, must be my excuse for writing you and requesting to invite Gen. Harris to see you. If you should see proper to do so, please signify to him when it will be convenient for you to see him.

I am, very respectfully, your ob'dt serv't,

[Signed] W. S. OLDHAM.

It had the following endorsement:

Secretary of State, at his earliest convenience, will please see Gen. Harris, and learn what plan he has for overcoming the difficulty heretofore experienced.

Feb. 20th, 1865.

[Signed] J. D.

Rec'd Feb. 19th, 1865.

* An attempt was actually made to break out. In a note to me, Capt. Shurley says:

In October, 1864, one of the prisoners requested an interview with the Commandant of the Post, Gen. Sweet. The message was sent to headquarters. In the absence of Gen. Sweet, I ordered the prisoner sent to my office. He told me that for some time there had been an organization amongst the prisoners of war to break out of the prison square—and that one hundred men had taken an obligation to lead the way, to break the fence, attack the guard in rear of camp, and in the confusion that would ensue, the 11,000 prisoners then in charge would escape. He said that at eight that evening was the time appointed—this was about six P. M. that the interview mentioned took place. It was a cloudy evening, and dark—looking like rain. After dismissing the prisoner, I started for the prison square. The officer in charge told me there seemed to be an unusual activity among the prisoners—advised me not to go round without a guard. This, I knew, would attract attention, if not suspicion. At this time the barracks occupied by the prisoners were in rows raised on posts, and each barrack contained from one hundred and fifty to two hundred men. I noticed that there was an unusual stir among the prisoners in the barracks. After completing the tour, I returned to headquarters satisfied that there might be truth in the statement of my "spy." I at once sent an order to the commanding

our leading citizens whose property and lives could alone atone for the loyal part they had acted throughout the war. Gen. Sweet and his brave officers at Camp Douglas were equally active and vigilant. The appointments at the post were strengthened by every means in his power, so that as small a force as possible might safely guard the prisoners, and that a large detail might be spared to station in the city at the time of the election. Detectives were kept intensely busy to watch every suspicious character that arrived by the cars, and some were sent to Canada to learn from officers there what villainous schemes they were plotting for the destruction of Chicago.* Others went to the virulent Copperhead districts in central and southern Illinois and found that large detachments were to be sent here, ready for carnage and plunder, should the prisoners break out, and in any event to vote early and often in the infected sections of the city. Hence, on the Saturday before the election — Tuesday,

officer of the Eighth regiment to take post on the south and west of the camp. I ordered the Pennsylvania regiment on the rear of that, and around it. I had notified the officer in command of the guard of what might be expected, at the same time had strengthened the guard by turning out the other two reliefs. The rain began to fall, and it seemed to me that the camp was unusually quiet. The disposition of the troops had been made so quietly that the prisoners had not suspected it. I greatly regretted the absence of Gen. Sweet; he had been summoned to Wisconsin, but I carried out his plan to the best of my ability. Eight o'clock had scarcely sounded, when *crash* went some of the planks from the rear fence, and the one hundred men rushed for the opening. One volley from the guard, who were prepared for them, and the prisoners recoiled, gave up, and retreated to their barracks. Eighteen of the most determined got out, but in less time than I can relate it, quiet was restored. I had the Pennsylvania regiment gradually close in from the outer circle of the race course to the camp, and recaptured all of those that had escaped. I think eight or ten were wounded, but they gradually recovered.

* In a note to me dated June 3d, Capt Shurley says:

One thing history will bear out: that during the administration of Gen. Sweet the prisoners of war were treated as well as it was possible to treat men in their situation. Of course, the very fact of confinement is a hardship — but the Government furnished good clothing and provisions, and allowed a sufficient quantity. I have read extracts from southern papers citing the number that died at Camp Douglas. I account for this from the fact that many of the prisoners received at that camp were wounded and sick — run down by hard service — and the change of climate may have had some effect. We had a most admirable hospital, and busy, competent surgeons. Dr. Emmons, of this city, was one of them. I know that Gen. Sweet left that command poorer than when he entered it, and of all the millions he disbursed, not one cent entered his pocket — or those around him.

the 8th of November—Gen. Sweet knew where all the dens of the Knights of the Golden Circle were, and what was going on in them; what rebel gangs were expected from our own State, and what officers were expected from Canada to lead them and the rebel hordes in Camp Douglas in their bloody raid upon the city. To know them was to know how to provide against and defeat them.

But to be more specific: At first it was proposed to let loose the prisoners two weeks earlier, but for various reasons the thing was postponed till the night before the election. During the previous week, delegations began to arrive from Fayette and Christian counties, in this State. Bushwhackers journeyed north from Missouri and Kentucky. Some came from Indiana, and rebel officers from Canada. But so perfectly had General Sweet made himself master of their movements, that in the early morning of Monday, he arrested Col. G. St. Leger Grenfell, Morgan's Adjutant General, in company with J. T. Shanks, an escaped prisoner of war, at the Richmond House; Col. Vincent Marmaduke, brother of the rebel general of that name; Brigadier Gen. Charles Walsh, of the Sons of Liberty; Capt. Cantrall, of Morgan's command, and others. In Walsh's house, Gen. Sweet's officers captured two cart loads of large sized revolvers, loaded and capped, and two hundred muskets and a large quantity of ammunition. In his official report, Gen. Sweet says most of these rebel officers were in the city in August, on the same bloody errand that brought them here when arrested. When the officers were secured, Gen. Sweet's boys turned their attention to certain parties of a baser sort. Twenty-seven were arrested at the "Fort Donaldson House"—a base misnomer, of course—all well armed; another lot were captured on North Water street, and by evening, Camp Douglas had an accession of at least a hundred of these wretches. During the day the secesh sympathizers telegraphed their friends in the central and southern parts of the State that the trap had been sprung; parties on the way were notified of the fate that awaited them here, and they got off at Wilmington and Joliet; but some fifty who had missed the notice arrived on Monday evening, and were at once duly honored with an escort to Camp Douglas. Some of these visitors had boasted in Vandalia, on their way here, to intimate friends, that "they would hear of hell in a few days," and generally they were of the most desperate class of bushwhacking vagabonds.

The plan, as derived from confessions of the rebel officers and other sources was, to attack Camp Douglas, to release the prisoners there, with them to seize the polls, allowing none but the Copperhead ticket to be voted, and to stuff the boxes sufficiently to secure the city, county and State for McClellan and Pendleton, then to utterly sack the city, burning and destroying every description of property except what they could appropriate to their own use and that of their southern brethren — to lay the city waste and carry off its money and stores to Jeff Davis' dominions.

Thanks to a kind Providence, all this was averted, and the day after the arrests were made, Nov. 8th, the leading loyal journal of the city had the following deserved compliment to Gen. Sweet:

The praises of this vigilant, untiring officer are on every tongue. Those whose homes have been saved from midnight pillage and conflagration, whose families have been rescued from a perfect carnival of horrors, by his promptness and energy, will hold the name of Gen. B. J. Sweet in everlasting gratitude. When the story of this hideous conspiracy to let loose ten thousand cut-throats upon a defenseless city comes to be written, people will not only appreciate the magnitude of the danger which has been averted from them by the cool head and steady nerve of one man comparatively unknown to them; but they will be astonished at the perseverance and skill with which the plot has been ferreted out and the ring-leaders tracked to their cover.

In a general order, dated Nov. 25th, Gen. Sweet gives the number of men under his command during the previous eventful weeks at seven hundred and ninety-six all told, and adds:

On the 6th of November this garrison and the immense interests committed to its care in this camp, and in the city of Chicago, were threatened by Southern and Northern traitors from within and without. Added duty was demanded of men already worn. Detachments from the garrison, and heavy and repeated details were made, with scarcely an interval of rest allowed, which, if not done from absolute necessity, would have been cruel. Officers and enlisted men of the command answered each new call with a cheerful alacrity and earnest zeal which commands the warmest admiration. Seldom have so few men been charged with the protection of interests so great — never have such interests been more faithfully guarded.

Of course the modest, brave man who directed all these movements gives no hint of his own exhaustive labors in all these weeks of danger. He not only attended sharply to all his duties as com-

mander of the post, but he organized and sent out scores of detectives in all directions; he scanned their reports with an eagle's eye, and from a great mass of isolated facts, traced out the plans of his wily enemies, their location and their expected part in the breaking out of the rebels from the camp and the sacking of the city—knowledge of all these and much more was wrought out by his sharp, incisive judgment and ceaseless energy. As I had given him the lead of important facts at the inception of the conspiracy in August, he did me the honor to give me the substance of what I have above written, except, of course, as to himself, from his own lips; and all that I have said of this villainous rebel plot is more than confirmed by the records of the subsequent trials, and by articles and documents published during the progress of the events which I have but too briefly described.

May it not, therefore, safely be said that Chicago can never fully appreciate, certainly can never repay to his family the debt of gratitude she owes to the services of Gen. Sweet. Other brave men fought and fell in the fore-front of the battle; Gen. Sweet was there, and ever after his right arm hung useless at his side. Other Generals rushed into the thickest of the fight when towns and cities were burning around them; Gen. Sweet stood firmly and quietly at his post and saved Chicago from a fate equally terrible and destructive. They knew that the lurid glare would flash out their names on all the pages of their country's history; he was content to do his duty, to save his fellow citizens from death and their city from plunder and burning. Their adversaries were in the front, fighting openly "man to man and brand to brand"; his were venomous reptiles, crawling about in dark lanes and filthy dens, till with one fell spring the loyal city should be laid in ashes, and its people fleeing in terror before the bullets and the swords of the destroyer. They fought the rebellion with all the weapons of legitimate warfare; he had to fight secret treason with such strategy and the best means that his own genius and restless energy could invent. Before their serried ranks the rebellion was consumed in a blaze of glory; Gen. Sweet's wisdom and untiring efforts saved Chicago to rejoice with brave men and sterling patriots everywhere over a country saved, a free, united, enduring Republic.

The subsequent history of Camp Douglas can be told in a brief space. With the exception of Fortress Monroe, it was said to be the largest and best appointed camp in the United States. More than 80,000 prisoners had been housed there, and large numbers were confined there during the winter of 1864-5. The spring after the collapse of the rebellion, they were gradually discharged and furnished with transportation to their homes, one even being sent by Capt. Shurley to San Francisco. Gen. Sweet resigned at the commencement of the year, and Capt. Shurly succeeded as Post Adjutant. He remained in charge till October, discharging the prisoners and attending to the other duties incident to his position. During the fall of 1865 the camp was dismantled, and the property sold under the direction of Col. L. H. Pierce.

During the winter previous a Court Martial convened at Cincinnati, and the officers captured in November, were duly tried for their crimes. Walsh, General of the Sons of Liberty, was sentenced to the State's prison with hard labor for three years; Marmaduke and Morris were acquitted; Grenfell was found guilty of conspiracy to release the prisoners from Camp Douglas, and to lay waste and destroy Chicago, and was sentenced to death; Semmes was sentenced to a year in the penitentiary, and Anderson shot himself, thus saving the authorities all further trouble on his account. Fortunately for the others, the rebellion was crushed out and their sentences were in due time remitted.

A few words more in relation to Gen. Sweet: After he was mustered out of the service he bought a small farm at Wheaton, and opened a law office in this city. In 1869, he was appointed United States Pension Agent for the Northern District of Illinois, office at Chicago, and he held that position until April, 1870, when he received the appointment of Supervisor of Internal Revenue for the State of Illinois. In January, 1872, he was called to Washington and offered the position of First Deputy Commissioner of Internal Revenue. He accepted, and held that place until his death. Gen. Sweet died on the 1st day of January, 1874, at Washington, D. C., aged forty-one years, eight months and eight days. The cause of his death was acute pneumonia. He was ill only a few days, and his death was a cruelly sudden and unexpected blow to his family and his many devoted friends. Gen. Sweet's family

were all living at the time of his death, except his eldest son, Lawrence, who died August 10th, 1872. The death of this son was a terrible affliction to the General, and his spirit never recovered from the weight of this sorrow. On the last day of the General's life, when all hope of recovery was over, he spoke many times of his family in words of anxiety and affection. Throughout his sickness he was calm, courageous, and cheerful. He died as he had lived, like a man whose soul no terrors, no suffering, no sorrow could shake. He lived through struggles, sorrows, wounds, poverty and discouragement, bravely, resolutely, calmly and undismayed; and as he lived, so he died. Chicago will not fail to hold his inestimable services in grateful and honored remembrance. When monuments are built to perpetuate the memory of her preservers and heroes, let none rise higher than that on which stands the statue of General B. J. Sweet.

As an evidence that Republics are not always ungrateful, I beg to add, that his accomplished daughter, Miss Ada, was her father's Chief Clerk while Pension Agent, and also served in the same capacity under Mr. Blakeslee. In April, 1874, President Grant appointed her Pension Agent in this city, and it is the highest possible compliment to her, that no office in the country is conducted with more accuracy and success. While the last vestige of Camp Douglas must soon be swept away, and its place and history will only be known to the historian and the curious antiquary, the memory of her patriotic, noble father will become brighter and more highly honored as the ages roll onward.

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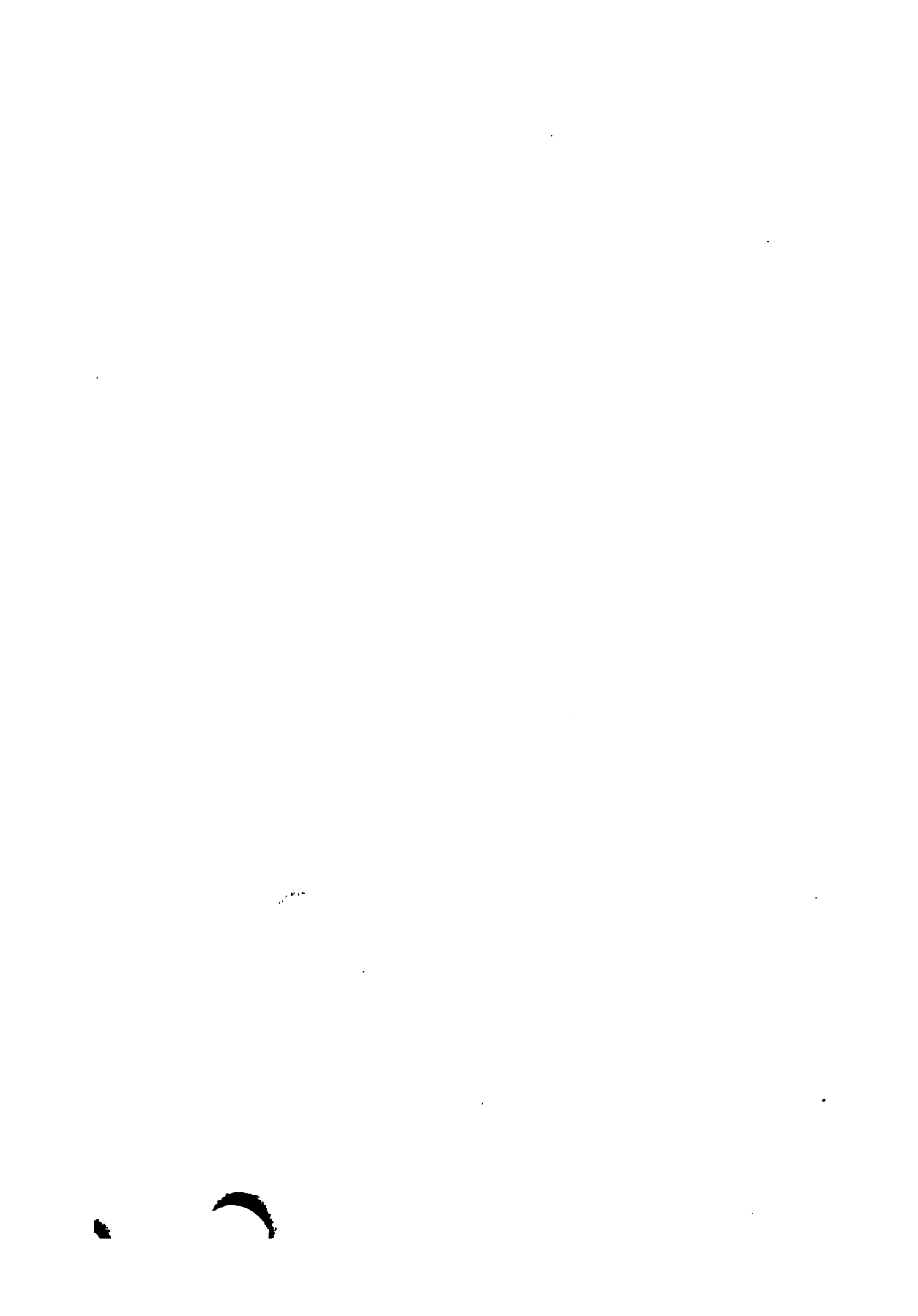
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